

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Claims 1- 38 (Canceled)

39. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 further comprising a second lug having an end interconnected to, or integral with, said elongate connecting portion and positioned opposite said at least a first lug.

40. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 wherein said head portion comprises a rectangular cross section with rounded corners.

41. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 wherein one or more edges and corners located at the end of said head portion are rounded or smoothed.

42. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 wherein said self-aligning coupling device comprises at least one nib for engagement with a corresponding recess in said engagement assembly, said nib and said recess being arranged such that when engaged, said self-aligning coupling device is retained in an angular position relative to said engagement assembly corresponding with said first position of use when the engagement assembly is inserted into said first cutaway region.

43. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 wherein said head portion is selectively interconnected to said self-aligning coupling device.

44. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim [[38]]55 wherein said threaded portion of said self-aligning coupling device is formed such that torque is applied thereto due to friction between said threaded portion and a cooperative thread of said engagement assembly.

45. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 44 wherein the ~~threaded portion thread-~~formed on said elongate connecting portion is manufactured so as to be a snug fit with the cooperative thread of said cooperatively-threaded engagement assembly such that friction is increased therebetween.

46. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamp assembly of claim ~~[[38]]~~55 wherein said engagement assembly comprises:

a first gear member having a first axis of rotation; and

a second gear member having centrally a second axis of rotation substantially perpendicular to said first axis of rotation and being cooperatively engaged with said first gear member such that rotation of said first gear member about said first axis results in rotation of said second gear member about said second axis,

wherein said second gear member comprises an internally-threaded central rotatable sleeve member that engages said threaded portion of said elongate connecting portion.

47. (Previously Presented) The adjustable clamp assembly of claim 46 wherein said first and said second gear members comprise beveled portions, and said engagement assembly further comprises a housing formed to retain said first gear member and said second gear member, said housing having at least one external surface that, in use, abuts a corresponding surface of said first cut away portion of said first object.

48. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim ~~[[38]]~~55 further comprising a channel abutment portion on said elongate connecting portion and positioned between said head portion and said threaded portion of said ~~associated with said head and positioned between said head and said~~ self-aligning coupling device that travels within ~~at least one of said first channel and said second channel.~~

49. (Currently Amended) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 48 wherein said channel abutment portion has a first position of use within ~~at least one of said first or said second channel wherein said channel abutment portion is adapted to engage at least one of said side walls of at least one of said first channel and~~ sidewalls of said first channel or said second

channel such that rotation of said at least a first lug about a longitudinal axis of said self-aligning coupling device in a first angular direction is prevented.

50. (Previously Presented) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 48 wherein said channel abutment portion includes two pairs of flat surfaces, each pair of surfaces meeting at an edge therebetween and said pairs being substantially opposed to each other relative to a longitudinal axis of said self-aligning coupling device.

51. (Currently Amended) The self-aligning coupling device of claim 50 wherein said each of said pair of surfaces meet at right angles and are arranged such that in each of said first and second angular positions one of each of said pairs of surfaces contacts at least one ~~side wall of at least one of said first channel and~~ sidewall of said first channel or said second channel.

52. (Previously Presented) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 48 further comprising a second lug having an end interconnected to, or integral with, said elongate connecting portion and positioned opposite said first lug;

wherein said head portion has a substantially rectangular cross section;

wherein said channel abutment portion comprises two pairs of flat surfaces, each pair of surfaces meeting at an edge and said pairs being substantially opposed to each other relative to the longitudinal axis of said self-aligning coupling device; and

wherein said pairs of surfaces are opposed along an axis oriented at 45 degrees to major and minor axes of said rectangular cross section.

53. (Previously Presented) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 52 wherein said channel abutment portion is tapered, such that a width thereof proximate to the head portion is greater than a width proximate to said self-aligning coupling device.

54. (Previously Presented) The adjustable clamping assembly of claim 52 wherein said channel abutment portion is formed integrally with said head portion, such that one of each of said pairs of surfaces is continuous with a corresponding surface of said head portion located on a side parallel to said major axis of said substantially rectangular cross section.

55. (New) An adjustable clamping assembly comprising:

a first object having a first channel of a first width longitudinally extending within a first surface of said first object, said first channel having a first opening disposed at an edge of said first surface and having a first cutaway region disposed at an intermediate location of said first channel distal said first opening and defining front and rear portions of said first channel;

a second object having a second channel of a second width longitudinally extending within a second surface of said second object, said second channel having a second opening disposed at an edge of said second surface and having a second cutaway region disposed at a location of said second channel distal said second opening;

said first object and said second object being positioned such that said edges of said first and second surfaces face one another and such that said first and second channels and said first and second openings are longitudinally aligned;

a self-aligning coupling device comprising an elongate connecting portion positioned within said first and second channels and extending through said first and second openings, said elongate connecting portion having a threaded portion at a first end and a head portion having an end fixedly connected to a second end of said elongate connecting portion, a free end of said head portion comprising at least a first lug having opposing lateral surfaces, wherein the distance between said opposing lateral surfaces defines a width that is less than said first width and said second width;

an engagement assembly positioned within said first cutaway region of said first channel and operably associated with said elongate connecting portion, said engagement assembly comprising a gear member engaging said threaded portion of said elongate connecting portion, wherein actuation of said gear member longitudinally translates said elongate connecting portion within said first and second channels;

wherein in a first position of use, said gear member rotates in a first direction to translate said elongate connecting portion such that said head portion moves longitudinally away from said first object within said second channel toward said second cutaway portion, and said opposing lateral surfaces of said first lug are generally aligned with sidewalls of said first and said second channels such that the head portion is prevented from rotating as said elongate connecting portion translates within said first and said second channels; and

wherein in a second position of use, said first lug is translated to a position within said second cutaway portion of said second channel and said gear member is rotated in a second direction to rotate said head portion such that said opposing lateral surfaces are positioned at an angle relative to said sidewalls of said second channel and such that said first lug abuts a sidewall of said second cutaway portion, wherein rotation of said gear member in said second direction translates said elongate connecting portion such that said threaded portion of said elongated connecting portion extends into the rear portion of said first channel and such that said head portion moves longitudinally toward said first object, pulling said first and said second objects together.